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ABSTRACT

National samples of members of minority groups and women employed as newspersons at radio and television stations were surveyed by mail in 1973-74, as were their supervising news directors. Women's salaries were somewhat lower than those of minorities, with minority newswomen being paid less than minority newsmen. Few of either group expresed overall job dissatisfaction. But two-thirds of the newswomen and one-third of the minority newspersons said they had been discriminated against on the job. Women were also more likely than minorities to say they had been favored on the job. Of the minority newspersons, 82 percent thought that being minority had helped them to get their jobs, but only 14 percent of the women thought that being female had helped them at employment time. "Excellent" or "good" job performance ratings came from news directors in 71 percent of the cases for minorities and 89 percent for women. A fourth of their supervisors said that minority newspersons did not perform as well as nonminorities, and an equal number said newswomen did not do their jobs as well as newsmen. But for both sex and minority status, two-thirds of the news directors said they saw no job performance differences. (Author/TO)

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MINORITIES AND WOMEN IN BROADCAST NEWS: TWO NATIONAL SURVEYS[1]

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With the coming of the civil rights movement, the women's movement and increased social "consciousness raising" in general, the question of discrimination in employment practices has received much attention. Occupational discrimination against ethnic minorities and women has been charged in many fields, including broadcast news.

In March of 1972, for example, the Black Caucus of the House of Representatives concluded that racism in employment "pervaded" the mass media.[2] After hearing testimony from black journalists and others, the Caucus charged that newspapers and radio and television stations had systematically excluded blacks from employment.

Information concerning the employment of women in broadcast news has been scarce, but available evidence suggests that they have also been underrepresented. A study by Smith and Harwood presented 1960 data indicating that about one-fourth of all fulltime employees in broadcasting (not limited to news) were women, that more than half of those women were in clerical positions, and that women were underpaid in comparison to men.[3]

However, the number of stations employing women in news positions has increased in recent years. A national survey conducted by Fang and Gerval in 1971 found that 45% of the television stations responding had at least one woman working as a reporter.[4] A 1972 national survey by Stone and Dell showed more than half of the Radio Television News Directors Association newsrooms employing at least one fulltime newswoman.[5]

Newscasting -- or "anchoring" -- is one of the main areas of broadcast news in which sex discrimination has been charged:

> "The newscaster has become something similar to a banker -- solid, weighty, serious, responsible, and utterly dependable... (The anchorman) sets the tone; with his solemn, low-pitched voice he embodies the wisdom of the world... It is assumed that a newscaster's authority and credibility are sex-linked to the Y chromosome."[6]

Resistance to women as on-air reporters appears more likely to come from male broadcasters than from viewers. In a 1972 study by Stone, 83% of a sample of TV news directors said they thought their audiences would prefer a man to a woman as a newscaster. Yet, of four distinct audience groups surveyed in the same study, Stone found that at least half of each group said, in effect, that the newscaster's sex did not matter to them.[7]

As with women, blacks and other ethnic minorities were seldom seen or heard as broadcast news reporters until recent years. But the situation may be somewhat worse for women than for members of minority groups. Secondary analysis of Stone's 1972 RTNDA survey of broadcast news operations indicates that about 11% of the nation's broadcast journalists were minorities and 10% were women.[8] While these proportions are roughly the same, it must be considered that women represent half of the population and about one-third of the labor force.[9]

A number of prominent minority and women journalists have told of discrimination. For example, Sam Yette, a black journalist for Newsweek before joining the faculty at Howard University, has cited several cases of conflict between black news employees and white editors.[10] And Dorothy Gilliam, also a black journalist, argues that media executives have failed to upgrade blacks already employed.[11] Her view is supported by Morris L. Stein, who interviewed several black reporters and concluded that often they were hired during periods of rioting and later ignored by their white editors.[12] Francis Ward, a black reporter for the Los Angeles Times, says that white editors may allow blacks to write critical stories about other blacks, but not about powerful whites.[13]

Pauline Frederick, Marlene Sanders, Liz Trotta and Melba Tolliver are examples of broadcast newswomen who have told of experiencing discrimination in hiring and assignments.[14] And Marya Mannes, occasional news commentator on New York television as well as a freelance writer, has said:

> "I cannot help wondering about a representation (in broadcast news) so token that it is virtually nonexistent in a population of which half are women... Surely it is an abnormal situation when major discussions and news panels addressed to world events are composed, almost invariably, only of men."[15]

But the situation both for women and for minorities has improved considerably since Ms. Mannes made that statement in 1968. This improvement has coincided with heightened social awareness and federal regulation prohibiting broadcast employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin or sex. In 1970 the Federal Communications Commission adopted a rule requiring affirmative action by stations to assure equal employment opportunities for ethnic minorities, and the rule was amended in 1971 to include women. The rule requires most applicants for broadcast licenses or license renewal to:

> "Submit (their) equal employment opportunity program for the station, and its network operation if the applicant operates a network, indicating specific practices to be followed in order to insure equal opportunity for Negroes, Orientals, American Indians, Spanish-surnamed Americans and women in each of the following aspects of employment practice: recruitment, selection, training, placement, promotion, pay, working conditions, demotion, layoff and termination."[16]

Problems of adjustment can be expected when change is spurred in part by government regulation. In face of the FCC rule, many stations rushed to hire women and members of minority groups. How have these news employees turned out? What jobs are they doing? How well are they doing these jobs? And how happy are they with their work? To what extent have they encountered on-the-job discrimination? And what are their aspirations in the profession of broadcast journalism? These are some of the questions to which the present study was addressed.

METHOD

Two separate national surveys were conducted to gather information from 1) minority broadcast newspersons and their news directors and 2) broadcast newswomen and their news directors.

In May and June of 1973, questionnaires were mailed to minority newspersons and their news directors identified through a 1972 population survey of 630 commercial non-satellite television stations and a systematic random sample of 770 of the 4,100 commercial AM radio stations in the United States.[17] Most of the 752 respondents in the 1972 survey of news directors identified themselves, and 300 of these reported a total of 735 minority members of their news staffs. The present (1973) survey used a two-step procedure: The news director received a packet containing the appropriate number of envelopes addressed "Minority Member of News Staff" and a cover letter asking the news director to pass these envelopes along. A cover letter, questionnaire, and stamped return envelope were in each "minority" envelope. A separate questionnaire, with return envelope, was included for the news director to complete.

The same procedure was followed for a separate survey of women in broadcast news. From questionnaires in the 1972 survey, 332 stations were identified as employing at least one woman on their news staffs, with a total of 622 newswomen among them. These women and their news directors were mailed questionnaires in October of 1973.

Response rates for two mailings of the minority survey were 55% for news directors (N = 165) and 27% for minority newspersons (N = 195). For the survey of newswomen, a single mailing yielded response rates of 52% for news directors (N = 171) and 32% for newswomen (N = 202). In both surveys, since the newspersons could receive the questionnaires only through the cooperation of their news directors, the relatively low response rates for women and minority staffers may be due in part to the two-step sampling procedure. It seems likely that many news directors who did not complete and return their own questionnaires also failed to pass along the materials to their employees. Neither survey sought identification of respondents.

RESULTS

Representativeness of Samples

The samples mainly describe minority newspersons and newswomen in television and combined TV-radio operations. Only 9% of the minority respondents and 20% of the

newswomen worked for radio-only operations. Such relatively low proportions of radio respondents were expected because the parent 1972 survey by Stone used a 5:1 sampling ratio for radio compared to 1:1 for TV; drew a lower response rate from radio (44%) than from TV (65%); found radio stations less than half as likely as TV to employ newswomen or minority newspersons; and found radio to employ fewer per station.[18]

Indeed, when such factors are considered, projections from the 1972 survey data indicate that there are probably about as many minority newspersons and newswomen employed by the nation's 4,100 commercial AM radio stations as by its 630 commercial non-satellite TV stations. These rough projections bring an estimate of about 1,200-1,400 minority newspersons working in TV and about the same number in radio in 1972. The estimate for women is 900-1,000 for each medium.

The samples consist heavily of respondents in large and medium markets. Response rates tend to be lower for smaller market stations, particularly for radio. And in the 1972 survey by Stone, separate analyses by market sizes showed minorities and women more likely to be employed in larger market operations. In the present surveys, 46% of the minority respondents and 45% of the women were in markets of one million or more; 42% of the minority and 32% of the female respondents were in markets of 250,000 to one million; 13% of the minority newspersons and 23% of the newswomen were in markets of less than 250,000 population.

Several comparisons of sample and population values made in the parent Stone survey indicated that the 1972 results were representative across TV stations (including combined TV-radio), but that small market stations were underrepresented in the radio data.

The proportions of different ethnic minorities in the present sample approximated related population values. In 1972, the year of the parent survey, the FCC found that 10% of all broadcast employees were members of ethnic minorities, distributed as follows: 66% black, 24% Spanish American, 5% Asian American, and 4% American Indian.[19] These figures correspond favorably with our 1973 sample of minority

newspersons: 73% black, 19% Spanish American, 4% Asian American and 4% American Indian. Because respondents in the latter three groups were so few, all minorities were analyzed as one group.

Appropriate population values were not available for comparison with the sample values obtained in the survey of newswomen.

It may be speculated that these results may show the situation to be more favorable than it actually is. For example, news directors who were particularly unhappy with newswomen or minority newspersons on their staffs may have been less likely to respond or to pass along questionnaires to their staffers. However, the news directors' response rate was comparable enough with those in earlier Stone surveys, and there were enough strongly negative responses to indicate that any such "disgruntled non-respondent" factor was probably minor.

Demographic Characteristics

The two surveys mainly represent minority men and non-minority women. Eighty-two percent of the respondents in the minority survey were male. And though ethnic identification of newswomen was not obtained, the data from the minorities survey suggest that not more than a fifth of the newswomen were members of ethnic minority groups.

Typically, both minority persons and women in broadcast news are young, college-educated and fairly new to the field.

Three-fourths of the respondents in both surveys were 30 years of age or younger. The median age was 27 for minority newspersons and 26 for newswomen.

The women were better educated -- 76% were college graduates compared to 44% of the minority staffers. Some college (but no degree) was reported by 20% of the women and 48% of the minority respondents. Only 4% of the newswomen and 8% of the minority newspersons had had no college.

The typical (median) minority newsperson had been on his present news staff for two years and in broadcasting for three years. For women, the medians were lower -- one year on the present staff and two years in broadcasting.

Salaries

Salaries for minority newspersons appear comparable to those for broadcast journalists in general, but salaries for newswomen were somewhat lower. Stone's 1972 RTNDA survey showed a median weekly salary of $188 for television newspersons with five years of experience. Our 1973 surveys found a median of $180 for minorities and $163 for women. While their experience was typically less, they were also surveyed one inflationary year later. Further evidence that women are paid less than men is provided by the median salary of the 16 minority women responding to this item -- $150 compared to $180 for minority men.

Consistent with these comparative figures are the minority and women news staffers' evaluations of their salaries. Table 1 shows that three-fourths of the minority respondents said they felt their salaries were "about the same" as those of non-minority colleagues with comparable experience and responsibility. But only about half of the women thought they were paid as well as men with comparable experience. In contrast, practically all news directors in both surveys said that salaries for these different types of people were about the same.

Assignments and Performance

Reporting was the most common job assignment being given minority persons and women in broadcast news. Table 2 shows that two-thirds of both groups listed reporting as a primary duty. On this multiple-response item, women mentioned other news duties less often than did minority respondents. Writing was a primary duty for about half of the minority newspersons and a third of the women. As for on-air work, the items in the two surveys were not fully comparable. Women were coded specifically for newscasting, and a fourth said they did this. Minority newspersons were asked if they did "on-air" work, and half said they did. However, reporting at most stations involves some on-air work, and this indicates that between half and two-thirds of the newswomen as well as minorities were being seen or heard on the air. The minority respondents, men in four fifths of the cases, were much more likely than women to work with newsfilm.

Table 1

Perceptions of Salaries
of Minority Newspersons and Newswomen

Salaries	As Perceived By...	
Of Minorities:	Minority Newspersons	Minorities' News Directors
Higher than non-minorities'	8%	8%
Lower	17	1
About the same	75	92
	100%	101%
N =	188	159
Of Women:	Newswomen	Women's News Directors
Higher than men's	4%	1%
Lower	27	5
About the same	48	94
Don't know how it compares	21	--
	100%	100%
N =	197	169

Note: Women's news directors were not given the option to respond "Don't know how it compares."

Table 2

Duties Performed
By Minority and Women Broadcast News Employees*

Duty	Minorities	Women
Reporting	68%	68%
Writing	54%	32%
On-air, Newscasting**	49%	25%
Newsfilm	41%	16%
Editing	39%	16%
Clerical	5%	5%
Other	21%	21%
N =	195	202

*Multiple responses recorded

**Not fully comparable. Newscasting plus other air work were coded for minorities, but only newscasting was coded for women. Most broadcast "reporters" do some on-air work.

Very few newswomen or minority newspersons said clerical work was one of their primary duties. But of the nine minority respondents checking "clerical" as a primary duty, six were women (though men outnumbered women in the survey four to one). One black newswoman said her supervisor "expects (me) to do secretarial work before any other reporter is asked...probably because I'm a woman."

Respondents in both surveys were more often supervised than supervisory. Twenty-two percent of the minority newspersons said their jobs involved supervising the work of others. And 13% of the newswomen said they were in managerial positions. (Though the two items are not equivalent, they overlap considerably.)

In terms of story assignments, 63% of the minority newspersons said the amount of time they spent covering minority news was "about right." Only 8% said they preferred working on minority news rather than general news; 46% preferred general news; and 46% said it did not matter. Newswomen were asked how their chances of being assigned to "important news stories" compared to the chances for men at their stations. Fifty-seven percent said their chances were the same, but 41% saw them as worse.

The great majority of news directors said they were pleased with the work of women and minority persons on their staffs. Table 3 shows that minority employees received "excellent" or "good" job performance ratings from nearly three-fourths of their news directors, and women received similar ratings from about nine-tenths of theirs. "Fair" ratings went to minority newspersons in about a fourth of the cases and to newswomen at about one station in ten. News directors for both groups seldom rated these employees' performance as "poor."

For both sex and minority status, two-thirds of the news directors said they saw no job performance differences by these differences in people.

Job Satisfaction

Most minority and women news employees reported overall satisfaction with their jobs. Table 4 shows that more than half of the minority staffers and well over three-fourths of the women said they were satisfied with their jobs. Only about one respondent in six for each survey clearly expressed dissatisfaction.

Table 3

New Directors' Ratings of Job Performance
Of Minority and Women Broadcast News Employees,
Compared to Non-Minorities and to Men

Rating	Minorities	Women
Absolute rating:		
Excellent	25%	40%
Good	46	49
Fair	24	10
Poor	4	1
	99%	100%
N =	147	164
Compared to others:		
Better	5%	6%
Same	67	70
Worse	28	24
	100%	100%
N =	150	167

Table 4

Overall Job Satisfaction
Of Minority and Female Newspersons

Minorities		Women	
Very satisfied	22%	Very satisfied	24%
Satisfied	35	Satisfied	61
Neither	27	Dissatisfied	14
Dissatisfied	10	Very dissatisfied	2
Very dissatisfied	5		101%
	99%		
N =	184		196

Equal Treatment

How does being minority or female affect an applicant's chances of getting a job in broadcast news? Table 5 shows that most of the minority respondents said they thought their minority status helped them get hired, but very few newswomen thought being female helped at employment time. Instead, the women were about equally likely to say it either hindered or made no difference. Two out of every five women said being female was a handicap when they applied for their jobs. Most news directors, on the other hand, said female status had no effect on employment decisions, but nearly two-thirds said that being minority helped applicants obtain jobs at their stations.

Discrimination on the job was reported by 36% of the minority respondents and 68% of the women surveyed. For both groups, the areas most often cited as discriminatory were pay, promotions and story assignments.

So called "reverse" or "positive" discrimination was also perceived more often by newswomen than by minority newspersons (who, keep in mind, were mostly men). Forty-five percent of the newswomen and 20% of the minority newspersons said they had been favored in some way on the job. Nearly all (93%) of the news directors said they did not favor their minority employees. Women's news directors were not questioned about favoritism.

In any case, both minority and women respondents indicated that they preferred not to be favored. A number of minority news staffers said or implied that they had encountered condescension. For example, one said, "Sometimes there are efforts made to apologize for my blackness." Another claimed the favoritism shown him was a "subtle type of racism," and others objected to "tokenism." In the case of women, 82% said "no" when asked "Should you be favored?" A typical response from a newswoman: "I've wanted to be a professional. I ask fairness in evaluation, and criticism when it's warranted." One said she preferred "to be treated as an equal with the men in my department, and another wrote, "I feel I have been favored a bit, but I don't like being favored."

Table 5

Perceived Effects on Hiring
Of Being a Minority or Woman

Effects on Hiring	As Perceived By...	
Minority Status:	Minority Newspersons	Minorities' News Directors
Helped	82%	64%
Hindered	1	1
No effect	17	34
	99%	99%
N =	194	160
Female Status:	Newswomen	Women's News Directors
Helped	14%	11%
Hindered	41	5
No effect	45	83
	100%	99%
N =	190	167

Newswomen's responses to four attitude items indicate their job orientations more specifically. As shown in Table 6, more than two-thirds agreed that women's news reporting is about the same as men's and, correspondingly, that newswomen on the job should not receive any special consideration. At the same time, women seem to fear no compromise of their sexual identity -- most disagreed with the notion that they had to "act like a man" to do well in broadcast news.

Minority newspersons were not asked equivalent questions.

Other Problems

News directors were asked if they had had any special problems with minority staffers, and 69% said "no." Of the 53 mentioning special problems, about a fifth cited undependability of minority newspersons (Table 7). Other responses, widely varied, included hostility and inexperience.

An overwhelming 80% of the news directors in the other survey said they had had no special problems with women employees. Of the 39 citing special problems, nearly half specified appearance, personality and competition or attraction between sexes as factors interfering with work. Nearly a fourth said family or other personal problems interfered, and a few said women were too emotional.

What do minority and women news staffers suggest to improve their job situations?

More money was the most frequent response in the minorities survey. Twenty-seven percent of those responding to the item mentioned higher salaries, a pay raise, etc. Nine percent wanted more responsibility, and 8% called for more open-minded management and colleagues. Other responses were widely diverse.

Of the newswomen's suggestions, 45% were critical of working conditions (including salaries). Other suggested improvements included: more professional respect (30%); larger, more professional staffs (28%); better assignments (21%); and more on-air work (12%).

Table 6

Broadcast Newswomen's Attitudes Toward
Women's Roles in the Broadcasting Field

Attitudes	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion	Total	N
In order to succeed in broadcasting, a woman has to act like a man.	12%	86	3	101%	190
In general, a woman's coverage of news stories is about the same as a man's.	70%	24	6	100%	195
Newswomen should be protected more than newsmen from danger or violence.	5%	92	4	101%	200
Newsmen should watch their language when a newswoman is around.	9%	83	8	100%	198

Table 7

News Directors' Perceptions of "Special Problems"
With Minority and Women News Staffers

Problems with minorities:	
Unreliability	21%
Hostility	11
Inexperienced, unqualified	9
Difficulty in firing	4
Public lack of acceptance	4
Other	51
	100%
N =	53
Problems with women:	
Appearance, personality interfere	28%
Family, personal problems interfere	23
Competition, attraction between the sexes interferes	18
Emotionality	15
Other	15
	99%
N =	39

Note. Table does not include data for all news directors, but only for those 31% who said they had "special problems" with minority employees and those 20% who said they had "special problems" with women who were members of the news staffs.

The Future

Minority and women members of news staffs were asked whether they aspired to advance into broadcast management. Thirty-five percent of the minority respondents said "yes," 41% said "maybe," and 24% said "no." Twenty-eight percent of the newswomen said "yes" and 62% said "no" to an item not including the alternative of "maybe."

How do these staffers view their chances of advancement in broadcast management compared to colleagues' chances? Table 8 shows that more than half of the minority respondents thought their opportunities were at least as good as those of non-minority co-workers. But for women, only 25% perceived opportunities equal to or better than those of men. Three of every four newswomen said their chances of advancing in broadcast management were "worse" than those of male colleagues.

DISCUSSION

The picture emerging from these two national surveys is hardly as negative as the one which has been presented by some leading minority and women journalists. The majority of newswomen and minority newspersons indicated that they were generally satisfied with their jobs, and the majority of supervising news directors were satisfied with the work these employees were doing. The news directors tended to see little if any difference in the job performance of men and women and of minorities and non-minorities. Few special problems were reported. Nearly all of the women said they got along well with their male colleagues, and almost two-thirds of the minority staffers said they were satisfied with their non-minority colleagues.

At the same time, our findings identify problem areas which warrant attention.

When one-third of the minority employees and two-thirds of the women in broadcast journalism say they have been discriminated against on the job, as was the case in these surveys, one may wonder why the great majority also say they are satisfied with their jobs. Perhaps many of them expect and accept discrimination as an occupational handicap in a setting where more human enlightenment is still needed.

The evidence indicates that women are more likely than members of ethnic minorities to suffer discrimination. While most minority employees saw their minority status as

Table 8

Perceptions of Chances for Advancement
In Broadcast Management

Chances	As perceived by...
	Minority Newspersons
Of Minorities:	
Better than non-minorities'	13%
Same	43
Worse	45
	101%
N =	184
Of Women:	Newswomen
Better than men's	2%
Same	23
Worse	76
	101%
N =	195

an asset in getting them their jobs, two of every five women thought being female was a liability at employment time. If this is the case, many stations are violating the FCC rule on equal employment opportunities.

The FCC rule is also being violated if women are indeed being underpaid in comparison to men in broadcast news, as our data suggest. While the salaries of minority employees seem to be about the same as those for newspersons in general, salaries of the women surveyed were about $20 per week less. Yet the minority journalists surveyed were more likely than the women to complain about their pay. It can be speculated that society has taught women to accept being paid less than men.

Equal opportunities in promotion are prescribed by the FCC rule, and sizable proportions of minority and women respondents said they would like to advance in broadcast management. Yet nearly half of the minority newspersons saw their chances as worse than those of non-minority co-workers, and three-fourths of the newswomen saw their chances as worse than those of newsmen.

The apparent lag for women in such areas as pay and promotion may be related to the fact that the FCC rule on equal employment opportunities has applied to minorities for several months longer than to women. Furthermore, minorities began expressing their complaints through license challenges earlier than women did.

The range of jobs being performed by women tended to be somewhat more limited than those by minority newspersons, who were mostly men. In both groups, about two-thirds were doing reporting as a primary duty, and in most cases this involves being seen or heard on the air. But minority newspersons were more likely than women to be writers or to work with newsfilm as primary duties. News directors have long contended that television sound-on-film cameras were too heavy for women. The fact is that the cameras in use until recently were too heavy for women or men. But those vintage Auricons are fast being replaced by lightweight, shoulder-balanced cameras which should be no problem for staffers of either sex.

The favoring of minority or female employees in broadcasting is not prohibited by the FCC rule. Indeed, "affirmative action" tends to imply a degree of reverse discrimination during the catch-up period in favor of people who were sytematically excluded from professions for many decades.

But the respondents in these two surveys made clear that they do not want to be favored. The newswomen's responses to attitude items are particularly at odds with stereotypic norms. Newswomen do not feel that they need to be protected from dangerous assignments or from "bad" language around the newsroom. They do not feel that a woman must be an imitation man to succeed in broadcast news. And they do not see reporting as coming in pink and blue varieties.

FOOTNOTES

1 These studies were supported by grants from the National Association of Broadcasters and the Radio Television News Directors Association. The research was conducted at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin, Madison, where Dr. Stone was professor and the other authors were graduate students at the time. Parts of the research served to meet masters thesis requirements for Ms. Nash and Mr. Regan.

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